

Parent/In-law

SUITES



There are many considerations families must make when bringing a loved one in need of care into their home. One decision is whether accommodations, such as a suite, should be added to an existing residence to provide additional space and comfort.

The Chesterfield County Planning Department is providing the following information so that citizens may understand both the zoning regulations that are in place for additions, or suites, and so that they are aware that a level of flexibility is designed into the county's Zoning Ordinance.

This document is meant to serve as a preliminary guide to assist homeowners, however, it is not the Zoning Ordinance.

As Chesterfield County's population matures, more and more families are faced with the daily care of elderly relatives, especially parents or in-laws.

For many families, the easiest and most economical solution may be having a relative who is in need of care move in and share the use of an existing home. This involves minimal cost and will not require any zoning approvals from the county.

A homeowner may, however, decide to add a suite, or second-dwelling unit, to their home. In that case, the home-

owner should always consult with the Chesterfield County Planning Department to determine whether a zoning amendment is required before building the addition.

Zoning regulations concerning "parent or in-law suites" are designed to provide ways for families to take care of relatives at home, but also to ensure that single-family homes aren't modified to the extent that they become duplexes.

Residential neighborhoods in Chesterfield County generally are zoned for single-family homes. A duplex is not

permitted in residential zoning districts without a zoning amendment called a conditional use.

The Zoning Ordinance is designed to minimize the impact to families, while also minimizing the likelihood that an added suite transforms a residence into a duplex, which could be used as rental or investment property.

Whether a suite for a relative is considered a second dwelling depends heavily on its design and its kitchen and bathroom facilities. A relative may have

(CONTINUED ON BACK)

Adding a suite takes

PLANNING

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT)

separate living, sleeping and bathroom areas without the need of a conditional-use permit if the home has only one shared kitchen; a relative may have separate living, sleeping and kitchen areas if he or she shares bathroom facilities with the homeowner.

The reasoning behind such regulations is that a suite is less likely to be used as a rental property in the future if it does not have either a kitchen or a bathroom.

The Planning Department defines a kitchen as an area with a sink and any major appliance, such as a full-size refrigerator or range. An area with a sink and small appliances, such as a microwave, hot plate, toaster oven and portable refrigerator (3.5 cubic feet or

smaller), is not considered a kitchen.

Therefore, such an arrangement could be combined with a bathroom and be in compliance with the zoning ordinance.

The zoning ordinance, of course, permits a parent or other relative to live within a house with their family. It also permits that relative to have a separate bedroom and bathroom. The ordinance also pertains to persons who are not relatives but are living in a home for the purpose of providing services to a family.

Conditional-use requests regarding the additions of suites to homes come before the county eight to 10 times per year. It is expected that more and more of these requests will be made as the county ages as a society.

Application Process

The Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors may approve a suite, or unit that constitutes a second dwelling, through a zoning process that provides a conditional-use permit. There is a \$2,200 application fee, plus \$95 per acre, that is non-refundable.

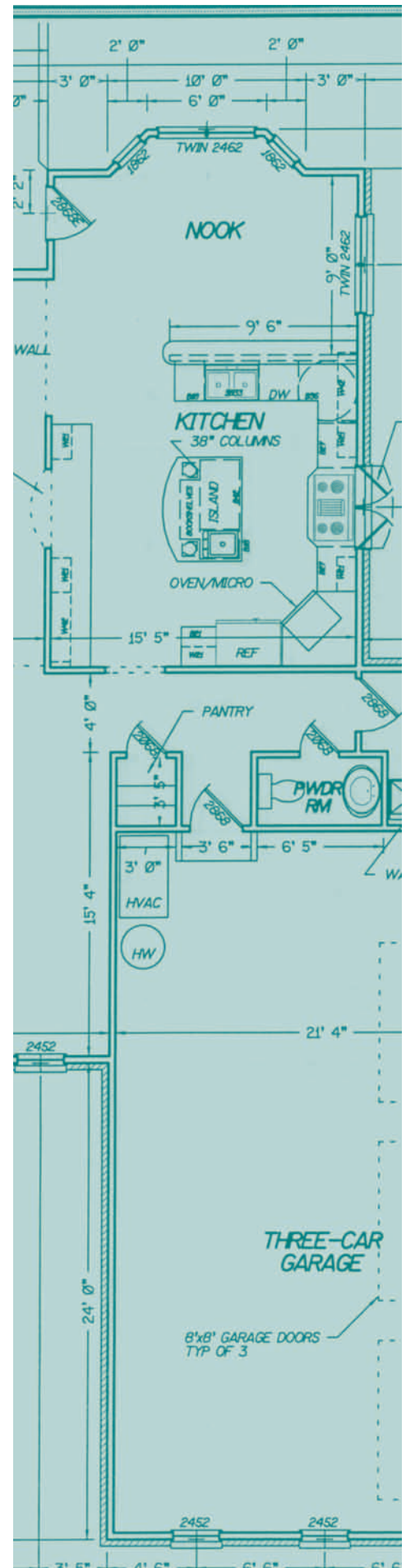
Though the application fee may seem expensive, it doesn't cover the entire cost of processing an application, the difference of which is absorbed by the county.

Because of the application fee it is suggested that homeowners considering applying for permits discuss their plans beforehand with neighbors and their Planning Commission representative. Homeowners also are encouraged to

check for any neighborhood covenants that may prohibit duplexes.

When an application is submitted, the Planning Department processes it. The Planning Commission makes a recommendation on it, then the Board of Supervisors receives that recommendation and decides whether a permit should be granted.

Also, nearby property owners, or neighbors, are notified and given the opportunity to provide input at public hearings held by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. The board usually supports an application for a suite, or second-dwelling unit, if it is restricted to family members and if neighborhood issues are addressed.



For more information, please contact the Chesterfield County Planning Department, Customer Assistance Branch at 748-1050.